

Metroid: Birthrights

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Summary: What if Samus and the Master Chief from Halo were related? First chapter involves a scene that Halo fans will remember. The Metroid series is the property of Nintendo. The Halo series is the property of Bungie Studios Inc. and Microsoft.

1. Prologue

"You ever wonder what's up there?" John asked. Sam turned her head. He was staring at her.

"Like what?" she pried. John turned his head back to the starry sky.

"Maybe someone up there is wondering it's like down here," he replied. She thought about that for a second, peeked at the sky, then turned back to face him.

"Do you think we'll ever meet them?" she asked. He nodded thoughtfully.

"I dunno." That was the last thing she ever heard him say. For at that very instant, her world became dark. She was forced into a sack of some sort. She couldn't see a thing. The sack she was inside began to move. She could hear the grass rustling around her, but that was it, no footsteps, no tire treads, no engines. She had no idea what was going on around her. Maybe it was one of John's pranks. He always did love to scare her. Yeah, that was definitely it. She was dead-set that John was pulling her leg, as well as the sack.

After five hours, she began to wonder how long John would continue this joke. When she was thrown onto a soft surface and heard the Warthog rev up, she realized that John had nothing to do with it. After another ten hours, the Warthog stopped. A door opened, then slammed shut. Then, silence. All she could hear was her own breathing. It was getting hot. She couldn't stand the heat. It made

her feel sticky and disgusting. Of course, she knew a little heat couldn't hurt anybody, but it was starting to get really hot. Someone must've realized she was still in the Warthog, because the air conditioning was turned on after a few minutes. A cool breeze washed over her. Just as she had gotten comfortable, the door next to her swung open, and the sack she was in was yanked out of the Warthog. She was dumped out of the sack and instantly blinded by the white light of the sun. Once her eyes adjusted, she was able to see a man garbed in a full tuxedo. He was bald and wore dark sunglasses.

"Full name," he demanded.

"S-sam uh Aaron..." she stammered. Before she could finish, he cut her off.

"Samus Aran," he replied with a hint of amusement in his voice. "Welcome to the intergalactic child exchange."

Samus woke with a start, nearly bashing her head against the bunk on top of her. Why did she even have that top bunk? It wasn't as if she ever had any guests. Sitting upright, she placed her feet on the ground and stood up. The orange shag carpet felt nice under her bare feet. She opened her eyes slowly, but it didn't help much. The room was nearly pitch black. Her stomach growled. She was hungry. She looked at the clock. It flashed 0000 repeatedly. She needed to replace its batteries sometime soon. Oh well, on to more pressing matters, like food. She padded her way to the kitchen, letting loose a couple of yawns on the way. Her kitchen was full of places to keep food. Cabinets lined the walls. Two refrigerators fought for her attention against each wall. There were at least five pantries stowed away in the walls. Unfortunately, these various ways to contain food were useless without food inside them. Finally, after scouring every cabinet, every pantry, and both refrigerators, she added "buy groceries" to her mental list of things to do. This didn't help her current situation one bit, however. She needed food, now. She pulled up a chair from the nearby table to think about where she could get food quick and saw something dark and small jump down from it. She grabbed a nearby flashlight and laser pistol and aimed both at the now motionless shadow. Turning on the flashlight, she quickly realized that the possible threat was a fat tabby kitten. She placed the laser pistol back into its concealed tabletop holster, set the flashlight down on the table, and picked the fat, young feline up.

"Oh my! You're heavy!" she grunted. She held the defenseless lump of fat up to her face. "What are you doing in my house?" The crumbs on its whiskers told her all she needed to know. "So that's where all my bread went." She noticed a thin collar around its neck and a rather large tag. She grabbed her flashlight once again and read it aloud. "Piggy, Property of Ms. Samus Aran." She glanced at the cat's pudgy face. "You know, that's not a bad name for you." She looked back at the tag. At the bottom, it read "Turn tag over." She did so and read the following:

"Samus, I know you may not exactly enjoy my presence in your life, but I do like you, only as a friend, of course. In any case, I bought Piggy for you to keep, as a token of memory of me should I not return from this or any other mission I may accept in the future. He is low maintenance, has had all of his shots, and is extremely affectionate, or so I'm told. I hope you love him. If not, I'm sure you'll at least

learn to tolerate him as you did me.

~Sgt. Devan Reynolds, USIGN."

Samus took another look at Piggy. His face was fat, furry, and full of naivety. She couldn't refuse this gift from Devan. Even though she didn't have feelings for him, she could certainly warm up to Piggy. "Ok, you. No pooping on the carpet, no tearing up the furniture, and no leaving dead rodents and bugs for me to pick up. You got it?" Piggy blinked obliviously. Samus couldn't resist a smile. "Good enough."

2. Rude Awakenings

The convenience store was only two blocks away, but Samus' HoverCycle was running low on power. There was no way to tell if she could make it. The streetlight was red, which wasn't helping. There was a beat-up Warthog to her right and a pimped out Mustang to her left. Both drivers took turns making cat calls at her, which also wasn't helping. The light turned green. She revved up the HoverCycle and took off, getting as far away from the two men as quickly as possible. The wind felt good against her against her new civ-suit. Her new helmet felt more comfortable too. The convenience store drew more slowly closer as she decelerated to the regular speed limit. She turned off of the road and parked right behind the store, landing the cycle on a charging pad. Upon entrance, Samus noticed two burly men walk right by her and out of the store. They were large and covered in grime. One of them smelled of onions and bananas, the other of grease and cow pies. She didn't pay too much attention to them as she entered, but the obvious was hard to avoid. The Luminoth cashier behind the counter bowed to her in a respectful manner. If she had met this one before, she definitely wouldn't have been able to tell from looks. Every Luminoth she had ever seen had looked nearly exactly the same. She quickly dipped her head and continued on to the food section. Grabbing a can of tuna for Piggy, not that he likely needed it, and a turkey sandwich for herself, she almost immediately returned to the counter.

"Did you find everything to your liking?" the Luminoth inquired airily as it scanned the items.

"Yeah," Samus replied. Her mind wandered once again to the two "gentlemen" she had passed by. Beyond the obvious, she had noticed a tattoo on each of their necks. She wasn't usually one to judge on those things. After all, she had a couple "tattoos" herself. On the other hand, there was something about those tattoos that rang a bell somewhere in the back of her mind. After a second, it slammed into the forefront.

"Keep a hold of those things, will you?" she called back at the Luminoth as she quickly stepped out the door. "I won't be a minute." As she rounded the corner, she saw exactly what she expected. They were scrapping her HoverCycle on the spot! Fortunately for her, they were too focused on the bike to notice her. She touched a concealed panel on her wrist. Within an instant, she was inside the Omega Suit. The two scrappers, previously ignorant about the woman behind them, were suddenly taken out of their technological paradise by the sound of a charging arm cannon. They stopped with their work and slowly turned around in unison. It was obvious that their only experience

with the law was from old movies. In other words, they were greenhorns, easily manipulated.

"Alright, boys," Samus announced through the suit's loudspeaker. "You listen and you listen good." She had her arm cannon trained on the heavier one. He was more likely to cause trouble. "You are going to put that bike back together, piece by piece. Following that, you are never going to touch that bike again. Instead, you are going to leave town and consider a new line of work. You got that?" The two men continued to stand there, hands in the air, petrified. Was she really that scary?

"Hey, why aren't you..." Suddenly, it dawned on Samus that there was something bigger standing directly to her six o'clock. Powering down her cannon, she turned around to see a green, alloy chest plate. The words UNSC were stenciled in on one side. Great, another jarhead, tall one too. There was no doubt in her mind about how this was going to go down. She looked up just as the soldier looked down. He was also wearing a helmet with a reflective visor, great. This guy had "Does Not Play Well With Others" written all over him.

"These two bothering you, ma'am?" he said in a gruff tone of voice. He had obviously seen some kind of war. Only veterans and smokers had that kind of voice. He could easily be both.

"No, actually. These two were just about to..." Samus turned around to find that there were no "these two" to which she could point. "...repair my HoverCycle." They had run off, great. Now, she was going to have to fix the bike herself. Already, she didn't like this guy.

"Not a very reliable repair service, if you ask me," the jarhead replied. He started walking away, but turned. "I'll call a mechanic, let him know it's urgent." With that, he turned the corner and was gone. Samus powered down and returned to the store. The Luminoth bowed again, and she bowed back.

"How much do I owe you?" she asked, reaching for her card. The Luminoth bowed again.

"Please, take it free of charge, A-Ran." So, she had met this one before. She bowed back again and left, food in hand.

"May the Light of Aether guide your path!" the Luminoth called after her, but the door had already closed behind her. Samus waited about half an hour for the mechanic. Apparently, urgent calls meant nothing to them anymore. He fixed up her bike and demanded double of what she knew it would cost under any other circumstances. She didn't care. All she wanted to do was get home and get some sleep. He swiped her card and went along his merry way, and Samus saddled herself on the HoverCycle. As soon as she tried to start it up, however, she realized that the two goons had run off with the power cell, something the mechanic had failed to mention. She was about to walk her bike home when the Luminoth appeared from around the corner carrying something. As he got closer, she realized it was the very power cell she needed.

"I always keep a spare in the back room. You are not the first customer those hooligans have stolen from." Samus decided that she would have to seek out his employer someday and demand that he get a

promotion or a raise or something. For now, however, Samus was content with graciously accepting the cell, placing it carefully inside the Hovercycle, and speeding off into the night.

Samus seemed to announce herself without a word as she entered the house. Piggy was already waiting at the door, purring and waving his tail. He rubbed against her leg affectionately as she opened the can and poured the tuna into the bowl. As soon as the food was on the ground, he was face-first into it. Samus patted his fat back and disrobed as she returned to her bunk. The clock was still flashing 0000, but she knew that it was at least 0300. She would likely get six hours of sleep at best.

The comm alert blared. Samus would not be getting any sleep tonight.

3. Enter the Titans

"Ms. Aran, this is Commander Raymond Jones of the United Nations Space Command Navy." Great, another UNSC jock had come to brighten her day. "We need you for a mission. We will be willing to pay you your normal rate plus a bonus if you-" Samus had already ended the link. It looked like she was headed for UNSC Headquarters.

"Any objections, lady?" It was Adam. He had invaded her home network again, but he was right. She had forgotten to accept,

"Send him a short mail," she replied as she left. Almost instantly, however, she was back inside. "Cats like water," she said to herself as she placed a bowl of it on the floor. "Adam, I want you in my ship and ready to go in no more than three hours."

"Yes, ma'am," was the only response he could give within the time it took her to get back out the door. Samus leapt onto her HoverCycle and shot towards UNSC Headquarters like a bat out of hell. This was a job, and, regardless of the client, she would get it done. After all, she was no longer the Galactic Federation's pet mercenary.

"Your man is late, Commander." The Admiral was making a blatant statement of the obvious, but the Commander understood why it was being stated.

"Samus will be here. I promise." He repeated. "Aran's services come highly recommended. You won't be disappointed."

"I had best not be, or you will find yourself short more than just a job," the Admiral explained. "You'll notice that my man is already here." He waved at darkened corridor. A man, no, a giant stepped out from the shadows. He was armed in the uniform of the Spartans, Mjolnir Mark VI, possibly Mark VII. His very presence made Commander Jones shake in his standard-issue boots.

"Commander," the Admiral paused for effect. "Meet the Spartan Project's most successful production. His designation is Spartan-117, but you may know him simply as 'the Master Chief'." Commander Jones really hoped that Samus was all that his informant said she would be. This soldier, the Master Chief, was the greatest of Earth's defenses, a one-man army equipped with the best gear that taxpayers' money could provide. It was said that he had taken on both the Covenant and

the Flood nearly single-handedly in the Interplanetary War. How could anyone possibly measure up to that?

Suddenly, Commander Jones heard clapping. The Admiral heard it too. They both turned to ascertain its source. Before them, in the distance of the room, another soldier sauntered towards them, this one clad in strange armor the likes of which he had never seen. The Master Chief had already drawn his weapon. This strange other soldier carried his weapon on his right arm. In fact, it seemed as though it was part of his arm, an arm cannon. Was this the Samus Aran he had been told about? Was this the soldier-for-hire who had single-handedly fought off an entire base of Space Pirates, seemingly decimating all of its high-ranking officers in one fell swoop? Was this the hunter who could be held personally responsible for the extinction of the deep space parasites known as Metroid? It had to be!

"This is your man, I presume?" The Admiral outstretched a cold, unwelcoming hand to the fabled bounty hunter. Samus didn't even glance down.

"Actually, she's a woman." the Master Chief corrected him.

"I assume I'm to be working with him," Samus guessed. The Chief was right, Samus was female. The Admiral coldly retracted his hand.

"By that tone, I can tell you've met. Is this going to be a problem?"

"Absolutely not," Samus replied. "As long as you're paying, the job's as good as done." The Admiral nearly smiled. Commander Jones knew that it had been a long time since the UNSC had run into someone with this kind of attitude.

"Very well," he replied, terminating negotiations for the time being. "If you will all turn your attention to the screen, we can get started." Commander Jones noticed that he had been the only one to take a seat, and so he stood. The screen flickered to life and began to display various technical data, nothing Commander Jones could read.

"Three weeks ago, we lost contact with one of our battlecruisers, the UNS St. Petersburg. As you can see on the screen, all readings were normal right up to the moment we lost contact. It's as though they were swooped up by the hand of God."

"Is there any chance they simply crossed a few wires they shouldn't have?" The Chief asked.

"That's what we thought," the Admiral concurred, "until two weeks later." As soon as he spoke, the screen changed to show what had once been the UNSC Frigate St. Petersburg. "The damage was both intensive and thorough. They knew exactly how hard to strike and where."

"What do we know of the crew's fate?" Samus asked, professionalism masking the true beauty behind her voice.

"Not a single body was found. At first, I played with the idea that they had sabotaged the ship and run away, but their service records were too, well, normal."

"Normal, Admiral?" The tone of Samus' voice indicated to Commander Jones that she was likely raising an eyebrow behind that visor.

"Yes, normal," the Admiral confirmed. "If they had been some kind of terrorist cell, then their records would have been spotless. They would not risk getting into trouble for fear that they might be discovered. On the other hand, if they were malcontents or delinquents, then their records would reflect that, filled with various warning signs of some deeper problems suggested by various counsellors and therapists accompanied by write-ups from countless superior officers." The Admiral took a second to breathe. "All of the men and women serving aboard the St. Petersburg were somewhere in the middle."

"Okay, so mutiny's out," the Master Chief acknowledged. "What about-"

"-Pirates," Samus finished decisively. Commander Jones was left in awe as to how Samus had drawn such a conclusion from such little information. Apparently, the Admiral had been thoroughly befuddled as well.

"What did you just-"

"The damage patterns on this ship," Samus explained, cutting the Admiral off, "are a near-perfect match to that of Zebesian Space Pirates. This was likely the work of some rogue faction."

"It sounds like you know these 'pirates' fairly well," the Admiral noted. "One would almost think that you and they worked closely."

"Oh we worked closely, all right," Samus quipped, "on opposite sides of the battlefield." The Admiral still wasn't convinced. Commander Jones didn't blame him. After all, there were no files on Samus Aran, none at all. She had no personnel files anywhere, no criminal records, no major monetary dealings save a HoverCycle and a house out in the cliffs, both of which were paid for with cash obtained by trading in ten tons of twenty-four karat gold bricks. No identity searches found a single match, and no eye-witnesses could be found. This woman was truly a ghost, but even she probably had some skeletons in her closet. Who was to say that she hadn't taken over command of these space pirates after killing their leaders?

"Who's to say you won't turn this mission into something I'm going to regret?" the Admiral asked bluntly?

"You can have someone feed my cat," Samus replied. "The second something goes wrong, you have the right to kill him."

"You're that sure of your loyalty to us?" The Admiral still seemed a little unconvinced.

"I'm that sure of my loyalty to your money," Samus corrected him. "Plus, I'm pretty sure your big boy could take me if he really wanted to." The Master Chief had managed to stay out of the conversation for so long. The Admiral pressed the question.

"Do you think you could take her?"

"In three moves, sir," he confirmed. The Admiral was satisfied with this. He was smiling broadly at the Commander, as if to rub in some sort of victory. Commander Jones, however, understood that Samus only put up with that sort of condescension because they were waving money in her face.

"Would you mind sending someone to feed him anyway?" Samus requested. "I've yet to become fully accustomed to living here, and I've yet to fully understand the 'wonders' of animal care."

"Very well, the Admiral gave in. "I'll see that Commander Jones gets right on it." Commander Jones' day just kept getting better and better. He would be getting to visit the home of Samus every day until her mission was complete. "We will need your address," the Admiral continued.

"Unless your intrusiveness is more disappointingly limited than I had hoped, you already have it," Samus countered. The Admiral did not respond, but his face confirmed that he had not disappointed.

"Now, as for the mission itself, I assume that this is a simple scouting job. You want me and this lugnut to make sure the coast is clear before you retrieve what's left of your ship."

"It's a little more delicate than that," Commander Jones piped in. "You see, the St. Petersburg was not just any frigate. We've been using it to test a new device that is fueled by a recently discovered element known as Phazon. Our tests were actually going pretty well until this happened."

"I'm beginning to understand why the Space Pirates went after this ship," Samus observed. "Okay, so you want us to retrieve the Phazon device as well?"

"I want you to retrieve the Phazon device," the Admiral corrected her. "That is your number one priority."

"Very well," Samus replied, seemingly unphased by the Admiral's blunt description of their task. "I accept this mission." The Admiral turned and waved for Commander Jones to follow him out.

"You accepted this mission the day you landed here," the Admiral muttered as he left. Commander Jones also left, but his parting words were formed only by an apologetic shrug of the shoulders.

Samus' auditory implants had caught the admiral's quip, but she chose to ignore it. She was, after all, somewhat of an illegal alien. She would do well to earn respect in the right places. It was probably best to start with this "Master Chief". She noticed him turning to leave and called, probably a bit too desperately, for him to wait. He silently acquiesced to her request, and she marched over to him. When he asked her what it was she wanted, she realized that she had nothing to say to him. She would be contacted once they were ready for her. She would be ready three hours beforehand. The briefing proved that she knew more about their enemy than anyone else. There was only one thing she could think of to say.

"I wanted to thank you for last night. It was..." She always had

problems giving proper thanks. "It was very noble of you to come and investigate, even if I did have it under control." The sarcasm was dripping from her every word, and she would have been extremely disappointed if he had not caught on to it, but the space jock took it in stride.

"I just couldn't bear to watch those two harm such a delicate flower," he replied. The space jock had more subtlety to him than she had expected. Samus turned without another word and dutifully walked away. There was nothing she could say to that, not now, not with a job hanging in the balance. Until she had citizenship and a license for everything she owned, this guy was her superior, and so she was required to let him have the last word. As she reached the door, however, time caught up with her thoughts, and something about his voice struck a memory. She turned around to look at him once more, but he was already gone. Could it be? After all, Reynolds and she had gone their separate ways after he helped her escape the Federation's wrath, and with his military record, it would not be hard for him to find work here. It was odd that his voice had changed, but maybe that was for his protection. He was as much a fugitive as she was. Samus turned around and realized that, lost in her thoughts, she had already left the building.

4. Motivation and Locomotion

Adam was already prepared by the time she had returned home. It was almost irritating how quickly he worked. It reminded her of the fact that the Adam she knew was gone, even if his mind was still by her side, and despite the complete stripping of Federation components from her ship, he still seemed to be harboring something against her. There was something deeper than circuitry going on, and, though she would never let on, it frightened her. There was too much at stake for her to be forced to wonder at Adam's motivations. She could not afford to risk her ship suddenly disobeying her input and veering off into a Federation dock. She needed to know for certain whether Adam's decision to stay by her was that of duty or that of loyalty, but she could never let him know that she doubted him. If his motivations truly were pure, she could not afford to lose such a valuable ally and such an old friend.

"How did the briefing go?" he pressed. Samus shrugged nonchalantly as she entered the house and deactivated her Omega Suit. She noticed a floating metal sphere following her. Clearly, Adam had finally gotten around to constructing his mobile shell. He had been complaining about cramped conditions lately. No doubt, he was enjoying being able to stretch his legs, despite his lack thereof.

"It went as expected," she replied. "They want me to do a job that they're too chicken to do themselves, and they're willing to pay me a considerable fee."

"That seems adequate for your first mission with these people. When do we leave?" This question shot a cold shock of realization up Samus' spine. They had never told her when they wanted her to get started on the mission. Maybe they had sent her something in a short mail. She quickly rushed to the Mail Board, a cleverly designed touchscreen that was embedded into the eastern wall of the living room. If a short mail was sent to her, it would almost immediately appear on the board, ready to be read. The aesthetics of the device

were pleasing too, nothing like the utilitarian control panels of the Federation. Whomever designed this knew it was going to be looked at multiple times per day and had clearly put some effort into making such a frequent activity as easy on the eyes as possible. It even made scrolling through scores of junk mail almost bearable. At the moment, however, Samus' attention was not on the craftsmanship of the tool, but the content of the short mails within it. After searching desperately through all of her mailboxes, she found nothing from the UNSC, save a few "enlist now" messages, or the admiral.

"Samus, I believe we are about to receive-" The comm alert blared, interrupting Adam mid-sentence. Samus whipped around and strode to the comm panel, which read "Live Video Chat Requested: Cmdr. Jones" and offered her the choice of accepting his request or denying it. She quickly accepted, and she suddenly found herself looking at the perspiring face of the young commander.

"Hello, Samus. Can I call you Samus?" he asked nervously.

"Miss Aran will do fine, Commander," she replied coolly, possibly too coolly. In truth, she was as nervous as he, but as long as the UNSC thought they were in the wrong, she was in the clear.

"Right, Miss, uh, Miss Aran. I'm terribly sorry about this, but we seem to have neglected to send you a timetable, extremely unprofessional, I know. It won't happen again."

"See that it doesn't," Samus commanded calmly. "Do you have one for me now?"

"Yes, uh. Yes, ma'am, Miss Aran, ma'am. It's uh right, uh-" The poor commander fumbled about his station for a good two minutes before the technician finally took pity on him and located the file. "-right here, ma'am!" With that, he pressed a button and a file transfer request dialogue appeared on her screen. She accepted and saw the mission timetable pop up in the "collaboration window" directly to the right of the "chat window".

"As you can see, we should be ready to go in a few days. We still have to get a few more authorizations signed off, and a mobilization permit has yet to be approved by Fleet Admiral Lord Hood, but things seem to be going smoothly. You may want to use this time to-"

"Hold on," Samus interrupted him. "You're saying you hadn't already taken care of this?" Now, she was legitimately irritated. Even the Federation, with all of its secret projects and questionable motives, had the professionalism to do all of the paperwork before calling her in.

"Well, uh, ma'am, we wanted to make sure we had you lined up before we greenlit the whole thing," Commander Jones explained, having lost much of his slowly regained composure. "Someone with your reputation and skill set is hard to come by."

"What about the big guy?"

"Pardon?"

"The space cowboy in the super suit." Even as she said it, Samus knew she was throwing stones from her own glass house.

"Oh, the Master Chief, you mean. I was actually just about to suggest you meet up with him, get to know him. After all, the two of you are going to be working together on this."

"Something tells me he's not the 'get to know' type." Then again, neither was she.

"I wouldn't know. I never tried." There was sad honesty in Jones' voice.

"All right, well, I'm going to disconnect now. I'll take another look at the briefing and the timetable, and I'm going to be charging you for the extra time you all are costing me. Sound good?"

"Yeah sure, wait WHA-" Samus cut off the connection before he could properly react. Doing so was, of course, completely unprofessional, but she was beginning to feel less and less obligated to show courtesy to these buffoons by the second.

"I take it we will not be needing the ship today," Adam stated, a hint of disappointment in his voice.

"No, Adam, we won't be needing the ship today," Samus confirmed. "Have you been charging up the bike?"

"Planning a quick spa trip, are we?" Adam asked, a playful suspicion in his tone.

"Actually," Samus answered, "I was thinking of visiting this 'Master Chief' guy, see how tough he is without his armor."

"You're not going to fight him, are you?" Now, his tone was genuine, genuinely concerned. Samus ignored him, however, and simply walked out to her HoverCycle, but Adam followed right after her.

"Samus, please tell me you're not going to start something... unpleasant," he begged. Samus simply revved up her engine and replied without so much as looking back.

"That all depends on him."

5. Kitty Feed

Piggy yawned. Being such a fat cat, that was likely to be the highlight of his morning. Then again, that was more of a relief than anything to Agent Devan Reynolds of the United Space Intelligence-Gathering Network. After all, motion sickness was his Achilles' Heel, and his weekly supply of medication was just barely enough to tide him over as he spent almost every one of his waking moments reeling through video after video of recorded footage and taking notes on the behaviors of "Subject Samus Aran". Of course, the lab boys just had to come up with a camera they could hide on the tag of a pet collar. Typical, they were too busy being geniuses to think of just hijacking any or all of the already existing cameras in the establishment. He had pointed this out to Command, but that got him no where. It turned out that USIGN had somehow signed itself into a contract with these boys that required every agent to use at least one of their gadgets on every mission, and this was the gadget they

had picked for him to use. It was almost as if they took some kind of sadistic pleasure from tormenting him so.

It was bad enough when he was assigned to this particular subject. The Chozo had been "kind" enough to give USIGN the necessary equipment and access to tap into the audio and video feeds from her "Power Suit". He had found himself frequently reminded of old home videos, if said videos were to ever be from the perspective of an Intergalactic bounty hunter who frequently performed extreme feats of aerobatics and fought off alien scum for a living. Of course, such an interesting person became a "person of interest" for USIGN. This meant more heat on Devan. If he were ever to botch this job, he would likely, no, definitely never get a second chance to botch any job ever again. It would be the end of his professional life forever, and he would be lucky to work at a convenience store once it was all over. Nevertheless, it was the excitement that made it bearable. The thrill of going on all of these adventures was enough to make the constant nausea okay, but then, she had to go and get infected with that blasted parasite. Of course, the suit had to be removed, and Devan had to be discreetly inserted within the Federation's ranks in order to monitor her until USIGN could clever up another way to keep an eye on her. Unfortunately, Devan's insertion took much longer than expected, and he arrived just in time to rescue Samus and her ship from two incoming Federation battleships. With no experience in the field, Devan was forced to rely on his observations of the only field agent he had ever seen, James Bond. In hindsight, Devan understood only too well how entirely stupid that choice had been. Samus immediately shot down his attempt at a subtle advance, and so he instead came off as a pathetic romantic. Following that, things got awkward in a hurry. His notes had to be kept secret, so he frequently had to hide them in various locations. Of course, this meant that his notes would sometimes be lost to the void of space, and he would have to rack his memory in order to rewrite them. Even worse, Samus didn't buy, for one second, that he was a sergeant in the Galactic Federation Marine Corps. So, in a moment of both total idiocy and genius, he explained that he was working for another military, the United Space Intergalactic Navy. Only later did he realize that this made his fictional Navy the only one in the galaxy to include "sergeant" among its ranks. Fortunately, Samus didn't seem to catch on to this, but she nonetheless maintained her suspicion, making Devan's job that much harder to keep secret. By the time the two of them landed on the first inhabited planet they found outside of the Federation's expansive grasp, a bustling little backwater world known as "New Reach", Devan had just about had enough of Subject Samus Aran. Of course, he couldn't let on to this, or he would risk blowing his cover, which meant no more paycheck. So, their separation was much more amiable than he would have honestly liked.

This brought him to today, sitting in a dark room in USIGN's smallest branch, looking through a camera hidden on a tag he didn't inscribe that rested around the neck of a cat he didn't give her. Fortunately, he had finally caught up with the live feed for the day. Unfortunately, this meant he couldn't fast-forward again until lunch, which was four hours away. Monitoring Samus' new house was a waste of time compared to what he was watching before, but with a new suit came new security, and it wasn't like USIGN could just knock on the Federation's doors and ask for the security codes to Samus' new suit. Technically speaking, USIGN didn't exist. Besides that, Samus had probably changed them all anyway. So, unless she was careless enough to divulge that information somehow at home, the cat was all they

had. Consequently, there was not much to record, but he was nonetheless required to as good as glue his eyes to the screen. More than anything, he wished something interesting would happen, like maybe a home invasion.

Just then, the front door opened. Finally, something was happening! The alarm hadn't gone off, so whomever opened the door clearly knew the code. Samus could not have returned this soon. Had Samus made a friend? No, Samus never made friends, not since that Adam Malkovich guy died. So that meant this was a break-in. Things were going to get exciting. Maybe he would kidnap this dumb cat, and Command would finally let him hack into the house's other cameras. That would certainly be a fun break from this monotonous hell. A man Devan had never seen before entered the house with what appeared to be a bag of cat food. His catnapper theory was looking brighter and brighter by the second. The man walked toward the cat, reached out his hand, and gently gave it a quick pat on the head. This light pat was enough to shake the collar around, and Devan had to hurriedly pop a few pills before the motion sickness could grasp his insides. In the time it took him to locate, acquire, and swallow the pills, the man had stood up and grabbed a bowl from one of the cabinets. Now, he placed it beside the water bowl that Samus had left and was about to fill it with food when...

"Hey! What are you doing?" Adam shouted, well, as much as a floating, metal sphere can shout. The man jumped a little and stood with a start, holding the cat food at his side. By this point, the UNSC patch on the man's jacket became apparent to Devan.

"It's okay," the man replied. "I'm Commander Raymond Jones of the United Nations Space Command Navy." That's right, he was that Commanders Jones guy from the video chat. Well, Commander Jones had neglected to answer Adam's question, and Adam was clearly not about to have any of it.

"Good for you, now what are you doing in this house?"

"I'm here to feed the cat, Sam-I mean Ms. Aran asked me to feed it for her until her mission was over." Devan could tell from the look on Commander Jones' face that he had hoped to do more than just that. Maybe he had been thinking of giving himself a free tour.

"Her mission, you mean the one that doesn't officially begin for another three days?" Adam had pierced a hole straight through Commander Jones' logic, or so Devan thought.

"Well, that's not entirely-" Commander Jones began, but he was cut off before he could finish.

"Just leave the bag and go. I'll take care of it," Adam ordered. Commander Jones gripped the bag a little tighter.

"What if I said no?" If Adam had a body, Devan was certain he'd be grinning right now.

"Then I can set off the alarm, simple case of breaking and entering. How's jail time going to look on your service record, Commander?" This time, Commander Jones grinned. It was an eerie grin that spread from ear to ear. Something told Devan this fight had just become two-sided.

"Go ahead. I'm sure the authorities would love to know how two aliens got through their security grids without going through their beloved immigration process." It was a bluff, and even Devan could see right through it. If the alarm were to be set off, the UNSC would lose a valuable asset, and that would look equally bad on a service record, if not worse. Adam began to offer his insight into this, but Devan could not hear him over the stupid, lazy cat, who had just noticed the bag of food, purring away. Great, just when things were getting good, the cat has to ruin everything.

"Would someone just feed the damn cat?" he groaned. Suddenly, everything froze. Commander Jones was staring in fearful awe at the cat. A lump fell through Devan's throat and straight into his stomach. There was no way; nobody could be that stupid.

"Did that cat just... talk?" Devan was mortified and furious at the same time. How could anyone be so stupid as to include two-way audio communication in a surveillance device? When would it ever be necessary to talk to the person on whom one is spying? His career, no, his life was over, and it was all because of those blockheads in the lab. At least he could take solace in the fact that he wouldn't be going down alone. Commander Jones leaned in toward the cat. This scared Devan even more. If Jones got too close to the tag, he might see the camera, then Agent Devan Reynolds would definitely be a thing of the past.

"Did you..." Commander Jones seemed to be asking the cat. "Did you just talk?" A single hope fluttered into Devan's heart, but he only had one shot at this, so he had to be careful. No, careful wasn't a strong enough word. He had to be perfect.

"Yes," he responded. "I am a talking cat. Feed me." Devan held his breath, waiting for the end, one way or another. Commander Jones reeled back, caught himself, and turned to look at the steely, stoic sphere that represented Adam.

"Did you know about this?" He whispered a little too loudly. Adam's reply speedily swooped in, almost too conveniently.

"Yes, it's a recent invention of mine. I've been experimenting with human/animal communication."

"But you're not-"

"Stow it," Adam cut in. "Just feed the cat and leave." Commander Jones hastily obliged, leaving Adam and the cat alone. Devan sighed a breath of relief. The sphere closed in swiftly on the cat. It's sole, purple "eye" filled the screen with unbearable light. Devan could not help but look away.

"You are an idiot," he chided.

"Hey, don't blame me. I'm just a ca-"

"I'm not talking to the cat. I'm talking to whomever's job I just saved over there at USIGN." How did he know about USIGN? From what Devan had managed to find out on the flight to New Reach, this Adam was formed from the preserved mind of the real Adam Malkovich, a Commander from the Galactic Federation Army. Certainly, the real Adam

had been lauded as somewhat of a genius, but USIGN was nothing if not adept at secrecy, excepting this most recent incident. "You're, no doubt, wondering how I know about you and your little secret club, right? Well, I'm guessing USIGN forgot to mention whom it was you were replacing when they assigned you to Samus."

"Wait, you mean you-"

"That's right. I was Samus' first overseer back when I was... alive."

"That's got to be weird to say," Devan commented in a moment of bravery.

"Less so over time," Adam divulged. "Now, I assume that the reason you're using this cat rather than tapping into Samus' new suit is that you can't. So, I'm going to make a deal with you. If I give you all of the necessary access codes, I want to never hear another voice coming out of this cat again."

"I'll take that deal," Devan replied excitedly. He was going to get his front row seat to the action again, and he didn't have to sit through any more hairball fiascos. Even if it meant more pills, it was worth it. The sphere turned away, but returned upon his call. "Hey, wait! What happens if Samus checks the security footage and hears all this?"

"You forget," Adam countered. "I am Samus' security system. We had a 'mysterious power outage' right after that pathetic excuse for a commander left. Any more questions you want to ask before I send you the codes and fry your stupid cat cam?" Cat cam, that was clever.

"Just one," Devan answered. "Your personnel logs detailed the circumstances of your death quite clearly, but there's something they don't mention, given this recent discovery about you."

"And that is?" Adam urged him. There was almost an impatience in his tone.

"When you made that sacrifice on the Bottle Ship, was it all for the job, or had you really come to care that much for Samus?" There was a brief pause. The eye of the sphere began to drift a bit, as though Adam had lost focus for a few seconds.

"Who said it couldn't be both?" Adam's focus returned, and the eye pinned itself at the cat cam again. "All right, sending codes in three... two... one... bye." The screen went black, and the Mail Board on the other side of the room lit up. There was a single message from Adam Malkovich, Agent of USIGN, K.I.A.

* * *

><p>Hey all, it's your author here. I figured I'd put a little footnote in my first milestone chapter. I just wanted to thank all of you for your support so far through all this time. I'll be the first to admit that four years is a long, long time to wait for five chapters of a fan fiction, and I don't see the pace getting too much quicker anytime soon, though I won't be going on another three-year hiatus. That's just not happening.<p>

I'd also like to encourage all of my silent readers to go ahead and comment. Your reviews are what keep me writing this thing beyond my own love for these two franchises, and not just the words of praise. Constructive criticism is equally appreciated, as I can use it to improve for later chapters.

Finally, I'd like to apologize for writing yet another "action-free" chapter. I promise, the action is coming, and it will be well worth the wait. If you've been loving every sentence of this plot-driven section, then that's awesome, but if you're biting your nails and waiting for the action that is the epic collision of Samus and the Master Chief, this is me throwing you a bone.

Thanks again for all the support, and I'll hopefully be treating you to another little footnote in chapter 10, which, on the current schedule, is due sometime in the next five years? Ha ha, just kidding. Plus, I am striving to make the chapters longer while keeping them both bearable and well-organized, so there will hopefully be more that has happened between now and then than what has happened between chapter 1 and now.

Peace.

End
file.